

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
VALDOSTA DIVISION**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

LARONCE HOWELL,

Defendant.

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CASE NO: 7:22-CR-55-01 WLS

ORDER

By Order (Doc. 71), entered May 17, 2023, the Court advised the Parties that the Court intended to set these cases for trial during the Valdosta Division August 2023 term of Court. The Court ordered all Parties' counsel to confer and inform the Court, no later than Wednesday, June 7, 2023, whether the cases were ready to proceed to trial. [*Id.*] The Parties were further advised that "[i]f this case is not ready for trial, a motion to continue the trial should be filed immediately for the Court's timely consideration; otherwise, this case will be noticed for a pretrial conference." [*Id.*] Defendant Laronce Howell did not timely respond to the Court's May 17, 2023 Order. Notice of the Pretrial Conference was filed setting Laronce Howell's (Doc. 74) case for pretrial conference on June 28, 2023, at 3:00 p.m., and providing that, unless otherwise ordered, the cases will be called for trial on Monday, August 7, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. or thereafter during the Court's Valdosta August trial term.

Currently before the Court is Defendant Laronce Howell's Unopposed Motion to Continue in the Interests of Justice (Doc. 79) ("Motion"). Therein, Defense Counsel requests a continuance of the trial of this matter from the Valdosta Division July 2023¹ trial term to the next available trial term. Counsel states he has been diligently reviewing discovery and determining what investigation is required going forward. Counsel advises that at this point,

¹ Counsel refers to a July 2023 trial term. However, as indicated above, the Court's May 17, 2023 Order and Notice (Docs. 71 and 74) indicate this case was being scheduled for the August 2023 Valdosta trial term. Counsel is familiar with the Court's trial calendar and the Court assumes the reference to July 2023 was in error. The next regular Valdosta trial term is November 2023.

additional time is needed to conduct that investigation, identify, and evaluate defenses, consider pretrial litigation, and analyze potential plea options. Counsel states that allegations in the indictment involve several alleged teenage victims, and multiple cellular phones and social media applications. Counsel needs additional time to gather and analyze data and information from these sources. Counsel further states that Defendant has an extensive criminal history in both Florida and Georgia which Defense Counsel has been investigating, but he has not received all the relevant records from state and local courts to complete that investigation.

Defense Counsel represents he spoke with Government's Counsel and is authorized to state that the Government does not oppose the Motion. Defendant requests that the trial of this matter be continued to the next available trial term and that the Speedy Trial Act deadline be extended pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3161.

Based on the Defendant's stated reasons, the Court finds that the ends of justice served by granting such a continuance outweigh the best interests of the public and the Defendant in a speedy trial. 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(A)-(B). Therefore, the Motion (Doc. 79) is **GRANTED**.

The Court hereby **ORDERS** that the trial in the above-referenced matter be **CONTINUED** to the Valdosta Division November 2023 trial term and its conclusion, or as may otherwise be ordered by the Court. Furthermore, it is **ORDERED** that the time lost under the Speedy Trial Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3161, be **EXCLUDED** pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7) because the Court has continued the trial in this case and finds that the failure to grant a continuance (a) would likely result in a miscarriage of justice, and (b) would deny Defense Counsel the reasonable time necessary for effective preparation, taking into account the exercise of due diligence. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(B)(i), (iv).

The June 28, 2023 pretrial conference as to this case is **CANCELLED**.

SO ORDERED, this 13th day of June 2023.

/s/ W. Louis Sands

W. LOUIS SANDS, SR. JUDGE
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT